

Structural Repairs Needed to Protect National Historic Landmark

Kingston, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today was joined Rev. Kenneth L. Walsh as he announced that the U.S. House of Representatives has approved a critical investment to fortify the structure of the Old Dutch Church in Kingston and help ensure it remains the most visited site in the Historic Stockade District. Hinchey used his position on the House Appropriations Committee to secure the \$350,000 investment on behalf of Ulster County as part of the Fiscal Year 2011 Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill.

"For more than 350 years, the Old Dutch Church has been a pillar of this community," said Hinchey. "Today, the current structure, which was completed in 1852, is in dire need of repair to help ensure it remains so for generations to come. As this federal investment moves forward, we will be able to fortify the exterior walls and preserve this National Historic Landmark. We must ensure that this church continues to be enjoyed by the local community and by visitors to our area who wish to learn more about our history."

The preservation of the Old Dutch Church building has been initiated in three phases. Hinchey secured \$100,000 in funding through the National Park Service's Save America's Treasures grant program in 2004 for the first phase, which involved emergency stabilization of the exterior walls. The recently initiated second phase involves the repointing of the walls, which will use 19th century mortar to ensure the structure can bear the weight of the new support system. This phase is paid for with \$150,000 from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and matching funds from Friends of the Old Dutch Church. The third phase will involve the installation of interior trusses to ensure the stability of the walls for many years to come. The investment Hinchey announced today would pay for almost half the cost of this work.

"On behalf of the congregation and friends of Old Dutch Church, we are so grateful for the grant and for the ongoing support of Congressman Hinchey in the preservation and restoration of our historic church," said Rev. Kenneth L. Walsh, Minister. "He has always been here for us and we look forward to working with him for many years."

The proper name for the church, which was designated as one of less than 2,500 National Historic Landmarks in 2008 at Hinchey's urging, is the First Reformed Protestant Dutch Church. The congregation of the First Dutch Reformed Protestant Church was organized in 1659 as a

direct result of the settlers' petition to Peter Stuyvesant. Stuyvesant gifted these settlers with the half acre parcel on which the church stands today. After the English wrested control of the New Netherlands settlements in 1663, King George granted Old Dutch a charter of incorporation and confirmed its title to the half acre parcel.

“The Old Dutch Church is an enduring cornerstone of our heritage in Ulster County,” said Ulster County Executive Mike Hein. “From the colonial times to present day, countless residents have worshiped inside the Old Dutch Church’s walls. It has served as a focal point in our community for 350 years, and, on a personal note, it is where my own parents were married. And with today’s announcement of a federal investment to fortify the structure of the Old Dutch Church, we can rest assured that the Old Dutch Church will remain a fixture in Ulster County for many years to come. I applaud and thank Congressman Maurice Hinchey for his support and advocacy in securing this funding and look forward to working with him in its implementation.”

The first of the three church structures was erected in 1680 and expanded several times prior to being burned by the British during their 1777 foray into Kingston during the Revolutionary War. Though gutted, it was eventually restored. In 1832, the second church structure was erected to meet the needs of a growing congregation. In fact, Old Dutch was the only church in Kingston for 175 years and as such, served as home to many different denominations. Finally, in 1850, the current structure was designed by noted ecclesiastical architect Minard Lafever. The stately structure, built from local bluestone, is one of the most fully developed extant examples of his work in the Renaissance Revival style and the design has been the driving force behind having the church declared a National Historic Landmark. Old Dutch Church stands as a cornerstone of the Historic Stockade District and is undoubtedly one of Kingston's most beloved landmarks.